

***Gender, Ethnicity and Race:
Global Perspectives***

Featured Speakers:

- Dorothy Hodgson, IRW, Anthropology, NB
- Keith Wailoo, CRE, History/Institute for Health, Health Policy and Aging Research, NB
- Zaire Dinzey-Flores, Latin & Hispanic Caribbean Studies/Sociology, NB
- David Hughes, Human Ecology/Anthropology, NB
- Jyl Josephson, Women's & Gender Studies/Political Science, Newark
- Yana Rodgers, Women's & Gender Studies, NB
- Anna Stubblefield, Philosophy, Newark
- Cheryl Clarke, Office of Social Justice Education, NB
- Nancy Yunhwa Rao, Music, NB
- Richard Schroeder, Geography, NB
- Temma Kaplan, History, NB
- Tao Yang, East Asian Studies Librarian, NB
- Louisa Schein, Anthropology/ Women's & Gender Studies, NB
- Ulla Berg, Latino & Hispanic Caribbean Studies/ Anthropology, NB
- Alison Isenberg, History, NB
- Laura Lomas, English, Newark
- Ethel Brooks, Women's and Gender Studies/Sociology
- dt ogilvie, Business School, NB and Newark
- Kim Butler, Africana Studies/ History, NB
- John Langdon-Lane, Economics, NB
- Thea Abu El-Haj, Education, NB

A half-day forum on the interplay of gender, ethnicity and race, co-organized by the Institute for Research on Women and the Center for Race and Ethnicity

In collaboration with the Institute for Research on Women, the CRE recently organized a faculty forum titled, "Gender, Ethnicity and Race: Global Perspectives."



Keith Wailoo & Dorothy Hodgson

Designed to foster interdisciplinary dialogue among Rutgers faculty researching the interplay between gender, race and ethnicity, the forum featured an exciting breadth of academic disciplines as well as a range in objects of study. Topics varied from the interplay between gender, race and ethnicity in public policy and community organizing to cultural forms such as music, ethnic newspapers, cartoons, sports, film, dance, and antiques. The presentations revealed a range of lenses through which the scholars are interrogating gender, race and class.

BODIES: VISIBLE, INVISIBLE, DISPENSABLE

As David Hughes (Anthropology/Human Ecology, NB) noted, many participants explored the question of what happens when certain bodies are marked as inherently political. Professor dt ogilvie (Business,

Newark & NB) discussed how black women are asked to modify their hairstyles to meet the demands of mainstream business environments. Aimee Cox (African-American and African Studies, Newark) described how young low-income women in a Detroit area shelter and job-training program wore headscarves to maintain their hairstyles and protest shelter organizers' insistence that they adhere to professional "codes of respectability." Their resistance, Cox noted, highlighted the ways in which these young women, as impoverished residents of urban areas, are "hyper-visible." They are often thought to need behavior modification, while at the same time they are largely "invisible" within the domain of public policy.



Ira Gang & Ethel Brooks

This contrast between hypervisibility and invisibility is an international phenomenon and resurfaced in Ethel Brooks's (Women's and Gender Studies/Sociology, NB) work on Pakistani Muslims in Brooklyn, which touched on Muslims' attempts to align themselves with Latinos who are at the center of the immigration movement in the U.S.

LABELS: MARKING AND MAKING DIFFERENCE

Other presentations also considered the impact of labeling – disease and educative labels, stereotyping of various kind – based on assumptions of race, gender and ethnicity. As Temma Kaplan (History, NB) put it, "marking difference is a way to create difference." Her comment spoke directly to Anna Stubblefield's (Philosophy, Newark) work on the role that categories of intellect have played in shaping race, gender and class difference over time. Stubblefield maintains that notions of "feeble-mindedness" and "cognitive disability" not only fed the eugenics movement of the early 1900s but also continue to inform contemporary programs like No Child Left Behind. Such labels also often exacerbate segregation based on race, gender or class. Cheryl Clarke (Office of Social Justice Education, NB) described the impact of labeling at Livingston College – how since the 1980s the Black/Latino label has been applied to Livingston College, thus isolating it from the rest of Rutgers and "obliterating the previous signification of Livingston College" as a site of radical and feminist politics. Her talk suggested that labeling can reinforce stereotypes, requiring alternative modes of signification to challenge and shift our deep-seated associations with social groups or places.

SOCIAL GEOGRAPHY: INCLUSION/EXCLUSION

The presenters also considered the role of tangible boundaries such as gates and geographical zones of inclusion and exclusion as means of producing and maintaining social difference.

Zaire Dinzey-Flores (Latino and Hispanic Caribbean Studies, NB) explored how gates and gated communities in Puerto Rico “further the idea of home preservation” so that the “rich/elite [are] protected” while “the poor are imprisoned.” Other presenters described their research on preservation and conservation as modes of producing boundaries, both social and geographical.

David Hughes’s book tentatively titled, *Skippers on Dry Land: Whites, Nature and Mastery in Zimbabwe* examines how whites in Zimbabwe developed a sense of mastery by constructing a “topographical identity” based on controlling nature and “ignoring African others.” Rick Schroeder’s (Geography, NB) upcoming work *White Spots: Inverted Racial Geography in Tanzania* deals with neoliberalization in Tanzania and the related production of new white enclaves, or “white spots” such as the Tanzanian Rugby Union.



While boundaries exclude, they might also sustain, protect and grow rich cultural traditions as Nancy Rao (Music, NB, pictured above) shows in her historical work on opera and theater in US Chinatowns. Her talk led us to question what happens when these cultural traditions and their role as “social actors” in shaping mainstream culture are hidden from national narratives.

RACE, GENDER, ETHNICITY AND PUBLIC POLICY

Several presenters suggested that policy should be better informed by considerations of race, gender and ethnicity, while others showed how policies are sometimes compromised by such considerations. Jyl Josephson (Women’s and Gender Studies/Political Science, Newark), for instance, underscored that the use of racial categories has a problematic influence on “cultural competency” materials within the U.S. government’s Healthy Marriage Initiative, which offers different forms of marriage counseling to low-income heads of households depending on whether they are African Americans, Native Americans, or Latinos. Josephson suggested that this differential treatment of ethnic groups was about maintaining “hierarchies of citizenship.”

By contrast, Yana Rodgers’s (Women’s and Gender Studies, NB) work explores the negative impact of the absence of race and gender considerations in international structural adjustment policies. Looking at the effects of liberalization of trade in India, Rodgers demonstrated their impact on widening the wage gap between men and women.

Several of the speakers highlighted that social assumptions about race, gender, and migration status are not simply academic concerns but also inform how states and multilateral organizations approach the collection of economic and census data. In his comparative study of gender mobility in jobs in Bulgaria and Germany, John Langdon-Lane (Economics, NB) likewise agreed that knowledge production about the economy should be

better informed by these considerations.

THE IMPRINT OF RACE AND GENDER ON CULTURAL OBJECTS

“You need to come back to basic categories like gender and make them visible; without defining problems there is no way to create alternatives,” stated Temma Kaplan (History, NB), whose project examines grotesque racial humor in the U.S., England and Spain, 1890s-1920s.



Dora Vargha and
Temma Kaplan

Similarly, Kim Butler (Africana Studies/History, NB) argued for the need to take apart easy categories such as “mobility”: she suggested that the differential mobilities of African women in post-abolition Brazil—depending on whether they are slaves or entrepreneurs—are just as important to understanding their life chances as are categories of race, gender and class.

A key theme linking the various talks was the role of cultural objects in marking race, class, and ethnic divisions as well as in constructing notions of belonging and citizenship. Studying the commercialized movement of antiques from the antebellum South, Alison Isenberg (History, NB) discussed their role in the maintenance of racial ideologies and hierarchies, while Laura Lomas’s (English, Newark) analysis of chronicles of migrant laborers revealed their contribution to the shifting discourse on Latino identity. Similarly, Tao Yang’s (East Asian Studies Librarian, NB) study of Chinese-language newspapers, Louisa Schein’s



Alison Isenberg



John Langdon-Lane



Cheryl Clarke

(Anthropology/Women’s & Gender Studies, NB) work on media images of U.S. Hmong communities, and Thea Abu El-Haj’s (Graduate School of Education, Dept. of Educational Theory, Policy and Administration, NB) analysis of the classroom showed how these cultural forms and sites play a crucial role in the construction, or obscuring, of communities and identities.

This faculty forum marked the first collaboration of the Center for Race and Ethnicity and the Institute for Research on Women. The goal of the session was to draw together faculty from diverse disciplines and schools to explore common concerns. The cooperation of the CRE and the IRW will remain to serve as a vehicle for a continuing focus on overlapping areas of inquiry.

SELECTED EVENTS

The following events represent a highlighted selection of roundtables and forums from our Fall programming calendar:

- **New Directions in Caribbean Studies**

Friday, November 14, 8:30 am – 5:00 pm, Plangere Writing Center, College Avenue Campus.

Part of an interdisciplinary initiative led by the CRE (in coordination with departments of History, English, American Studies, and Latino and Hispanic Caribbean Studies), this meeting brings together leading scholars from Rutgers and beyond to bridge disciplinary, linguistic and national divisions that often fragment our understanding of race and ethnicity, and offers a forum for new cross-disciplinary collaborations, comparative work, and cross-cultural scholarship on the Caribbean.

- **Fall 2008 Graduate Forum**

Saturday, November 22, Graduate Lounge, College Avenue Campus

Enjoy the rare opportunity to meet Rutgers graduate students across campuses and disciplines, and discuss works-in-progress on race and ethnicity in an informal and supportive environment. You will also benefit from job market insights from faculty and advanced graduate students. Lunch, refreshments and a casual dinner and wine reception will be provided to all attendees.

No registration fee required. To RSVP, or for more information, contact CREgradforum@gmail.com

COMING THIS SPRING!

The Center for Race and Ethnicity is pleased to announce its first interdisciplinary undergraduate course, *CRITICAL ISSUES IN RACE AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE* (556:426:01). The outgrowth of an earlier Center roundtable discussion, this course examines the complex inter-relationships between race, crime, and the justice system within America's distinctive political and social context.



CRITICAL ISSUES is a team-taught, inter-disciplinary course that blends a wide range of guest speakers, seminar-style discussion, written work, and rigorous analysis of contemporary problems. While open to all undergraduates, this course is most relevant to students who have a major or minor in Sociology, Criminal Justice or Political Science.

Time: Mon. 10:55 AM - 1:55 PM

Location: Ruth Adams 208 and Regina Heldrich 204

Professors: Lisa Miller, Political Science/Criminal Justice; Paul Hirschfield, Sociology

Enrollment Procedures:

Enrollment in the course is *via special permission number only*. Contact the criminal justice program, Prof. Paul Hirschfield (phirschfield@sociology.rutgers.edu) or Prof. Lisa Miller (miller@polisci.rutgers.edu) for a special permission number. E-mails to either professor should include your major, year, and special circumstances or motivations.



Address: Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, 191 College Avenue, 1st Floor, New Brunswick, NJ 08901

Phone: (732) 932-2181

Fax: (732) 932-2198

E-mail: raceethnicity@sas.rutgers.edu

Website: <http://raceethnicity.rutgers.edu>

Director: Keith Wailoo, History/Institute for Health.

Associate Director: Mia Bay, History.

Senior Program Coordinator: Mia Kissil

Graduate Assistants/Editors: Isra Ali, Dana Brown, Jeffrey Dowd, Bridget Gurtler, Shakti Jaising, Anantha Sudhakar, Dora Vargha, Fatimah Williams-Castro

- Facilitating research and enriching education on matters of race and ethnicity in contemporary life in America, in New Jersey, and the world
- Promoting collaborations and fostering cross-disciplinary seminars and discussions on topics from immigration and work, to ethnic politics and racial classification, from preservation of cultural identity to its transformation, and including questions of poverty, discrimination, advancement, integration, and privilege
- Identifying critical areas for future research and supporting race and ethnicity research and policy development.